

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY BISSAU
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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: PRESS REPORT OF SOVIET BASE IN CAPE VERDE

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY NORMAN KIRKHAM APPEARED IN THE JUNE 18 EDITION OF THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH ENTITLED "RUSSIAN BASE IN ATLANTIC".

2. QUOTE: RUSSIA HAS ESTABLISHED A MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS WHICH STRADDLE THE CAPE SHIPPING ROUTES. THEY ARE BEING USED AS A STAGING BASE FOR THE AIRLIFT OF CUBAN TROOPS TO AFRICA.

A FORMER PORTUGUESE COLONY, THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS WERE GRANTED INDEPENDENCE IN 1975. THE GOVERNMENT OF UNCLASSIFIED

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PRESIDENT PEREIRA PURSUDES PRO-MARXIST POLICIES BUT HAS KEPT LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

THE JUMBO JET AIRPORT AT SAL, ONE OF THE CHAIN OF 15 ISLANDS, IS USED REGULARLY BY SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS TO STAGE AND REFUEL FLIGHTS TO AND FROM EUROPE.

THIS AIRPORT HAS ALSO BEEN USED BY CUBA AS A STAGING POINT IN THE AIRLIFT OF 12,000 TROOPS FROM HAVANA

TO AFRICA OVER RECENT MONTHS.

ABOUT 50 RUSSIAN MILITARY ADVISERS WITH 30 LIGHT TANKS AND ARMOURED CARS HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE TINY, IMPOVERISHED REPUBLIC IN THE ATLANTIC. WESTERN GOVERNMENTS BELIEVE THAT MOSCOW IS TRYING TO SET UP A MAJOR NAVAL PORT THERE.

THE NEW FOOTHOLD FOR THE MOSCOW-HAVANA AXIS IS A HEAVY BLOW TO NATO NAVAL CHIEFS WHO ARE CONCERNED FOR THE FUTURE SECURITY OF THE ATLANTIC PASSAGE TO AND FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA.

ADMIRAL SERGEI GORSHKOV, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE SOVIET NAVY, HAS BEEN CONCENTRATING ON STRENGTHENING PORT FACILITIES FOR HIS SHIPS ROUND THE COAST OF AFRICA.

THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS HAVE ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE NATURAL HARBOURS IN THE ATLANTIC AT SAO VINCENTE. THE ADMIRAL IS SAID TO CHERISH AN AMBITION TO SET UP A BASE THERE FOR WARSHIPS AND SUBMARINES.

A 1,000-TON RUSSIAN LANDING CRAFT HAS BEEN VISITING THE ISLANDS WITH TWO DEEP-SEA PATROL BOATS. THE SHIPS ARE BELIEVED TO BE CARRYING ENGINEERING TEAMS AND MORE ARMS THERE.

THE RUSSIAN APPROACHES BEGAN SOME TIME AGO WITH THE ARRIVAL OF ABOUT 20 MEDICAL TECHNICIANS TO WORK IN THE HOSPITAL SERVICE. THESE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED THIS YEAR BY GROUPS OF ARMY ADVISERS.

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THE SOVIET NAVY HAS ANOTHER PORT FACILITY AND USE OF THE AIRFIELD AT CONAKRY, GUINEA, NEARBY. SUBMARINES AND BEAR BOMBERS OPERATE FROM CONAKRY AND NEARLY 500 RUSSIAN INSTRUCTORS ARE TRAINING THE GUINEA ARMY. END QUOTE.

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